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A1

GC Right, well if you wife's going out shopping, you have something interesting I think that we'd like to hear, could you tell me something about it.

MA Well I was in the munitions and, up to 1944, my father was killed in Breich Shale pit, the 12th of June 1944. I came home, I could tell you a lot more and swear words, and I was, June - September I was idle.

GC Could you, do you know the reason why your dad was in this accident and he was killed. Could you tell me anything more about that?

MA No, other than it was day shift, what do they do to the holes, what did they do when.....

JA They bore so many holes, they would finish in time for the staff starting for the next shift.

MA And went out to have their piece and then he went back in and it went off, as he was going back in to his place it went off and he was killed.

GC And can you tell me that, any reason, any cause, was it misjudgment or anything like that would have been the cause of it, or was it just one of this things that happened. And, you yourself were at Westwood in the canteen.

MA I started in Westwood, I started as a cleaner in September 1944 and I was there for three years till 1947 and I was from 1947 till 1951 in the canteen at Westwood.

GC Now at what age were you when your dad died?

MA I can't remember.

GC You can't remember.

MA What age would I be?

GC No matter .

MA Thirty seven.

GC Thirty seven. Now can you remember which company was he

working for?

JA Pumpherstons Oil Company.

GC Pumpherstons Oil Company, now did you get, did your family get any means of compensation or anything like that?

MA We got a little compensation, which had to be fought for by the unions.

GC Oh by the unions, ah that's good, so they did help in that respect!

JA It wasn't very much though.

GC It wouldn't be.

JA No, it was a token payment which was very meager that was the reason the union fought the cases. Everybody that had an accident had to whether.... I mean the token payment was nothing at all.

GC And he would be the main breadwinner at that time?

MA Yes, and he was sixty eight years of age.

GC Sixty eight.

MA He worked three years longer than he should, because Mr. Stein every now and again wanted him to stay on a while longer.

GC He was manager at that time?

MA He was manager.

GC And what effect did it have on your family, I.....

MA Well of course by that time the family were, well it had the effect, an effect on my brother. He left the pit and he went away down to Jedburgh to work in one of these, was it an American mill down in Jedburgh, he just couldn't go back to the pit. So it was just my mother, me and John.

GC Was it a bit of a struggle for you then?

MA Oh I wouldn't say it was that, I mean there was no wages any roads. God bless us and save us the Scottish Oils what did I get, oh never mind putting your hand up.

JA ( ? ) man to speak.

MA So you are, you were working for old rope there. What did I have, I had about one pound odds a week, that was in 1944. Well they didn't do very much for me I could tell you that, you can rub that out or rub it in whatever you like.

GC Now when your dad was killed can you remember who the manager was of the mines.

MA Mr. Cowl.

GC Mr. Cowl.

MA I'm sure it was Mr. Cowl that was there at the time. And Mr. Stein, Jim say's was the agent and he'd be there.....

GC He was higher up the tree.

MA Aye, he was higher up. And then he had another, I can tell you my other brother, he worked up in West Calder.

GC Whereabouts in West Calder?

JA Up in, oh dear. Jim will be able to tell you where he worked.

GC Alright then, I think we can allow you to go shopping now.

JA Oh I could give you a good laugh from beginning to end, right up, about all the mining talk we heard, getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning and lighting, trying to light a fire, a range, we'd no electric cookers, no gas cookers, no nothing, trying to light a fire, trying to boil a kettle, trying to put a frying pan on to fry their breakfast, making up pieces.

GC And how many were there in the family then?

JA There were three of them going into the pit then. And then my brothers would be, saying you haven't forgot everything before you went out, my piece box, my flask, my carbide, my lamps, myself, cheerio mother. You haven't got that on there. Have you got that on there?

GC Right then can you start when you, where was it you started with the Oil Industry, the Shale Oil Industry?

JA Oakbank Oil Company. I served my time, my old man was my gaffer. And, I served my time as a maintenance engineer there, and I was there until it closed down in 1931, when it shut down. So you'll remind of that time when there was a bit of, it was a job getting, finding a job, and the Company spread out the systems that everybody got a week off and then, took a lot more men on. Well unfortunately I didn't get started till about, but really when I started when other jobs so I was with wee firms outside, when I could get work, I was always coming back home ( ? ) of course, until eventually all along, when I heard they were starting this mine at Burngrange I got a job there at the sinking putting all the plant and that. General labouring and general engineering and general everything, because the reason I started there, did get started there, it, a portable electric plant arrived, a wee miniature power station really, which they used at till such times as they got the other power in. So I was there until 1935, I think, and then....

GC When did they sink Burngrange?

JA Started in 35, I know it was 36 or 37, now I'm not too certain on that. Anyway it was 36 or 37 that I left. I got sent to work in Addiewell where they were putting in a new power station, so I worked there.....

GC That was when?

JA That was 36 when I started, either 36 or 37. Never had had a power station in Addiewell, there used to have, it used to be a forest of chimneys and wee boilers in for each section. Now when they got this power station in and got it underway, and asked me if I'd stay in the power station until such time as they got men learnt it. So I was there for quite a time, and I must confess I rather enjoyed that, because we were getting, there were three weeks working and a week off then,

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if you were on shifts so I naturally quite, I just thought this was great, but however as the years went on they begin to ( ? ) think about building a new work at Westwood. So I eventually got sent down there to work....

GC And was you there at the start of Westwood?

JA I went down there 1941, 1941 I went down and the same operation went there, they were building the new power station and the same firm came that, to build it and put the plant in that I was with in Addiewell, so I had the fella come and see me and he say's "What you doing here Jimmy?" Och I say's. So I started with them until that power station was completed, and learned it, stayed in it till they got, learned it.

GC You were still working with the Company then?

JA Aye, still working with the Company then, but while I was at that job, it was alright, but I was never too sure where I was, whether they wanted me to stay on and whether they were wanting me to work with the power station, but, I lost notion at the power station there after a time, so I tell them I was wanting out. So there were another firm worked in Westwood then, they were at Mavon-Colson, Glasgow, and they were putting all the, handling equipment and conveying equipment, so I got sent to work with them and I was with them for 2 year, and they put me into their books .....

GC Was that, aye, you worked for them rather than, was it, what company was it, the Addiewell Oil Company.

JA No, that was eh, it wasn't that I don't rightly know. I think it would be just Scottish Oils, Westwood works you see. And while I was there, it was the fella that was in charge, he would rather had me there instead of the company having me and being able to dole me off the job when ever they like, so I got the chance of another number, which I knew was only going to be

a temporary thing, so I was with that firm for two years because they worked some unnatural hours there, and sometimes they were open when they shouldn't be open, so until such times as that plant was all installed I was with them, so I was on the job then after that, as maintenance engineer on with the handling equipment, working it, which wasn't an awfully good job, there was a lot of heavy work in it, hard work, and then as I gradually got older of course, I begin with, I wasn't too fit for it.

GC Can you remember what kind of wages you were getting?

JA I can almost mind, the first wage I had when I went down, because when I came down from Addiewell to Westwood, here the tradesmen in Westwood were getting less than what I had in Addiewell, but you see, I had a wee bit extra with being with this Ballieston work and working with them, and I think it was 10/3½d they had in Westwood a day, and I had 10/6d. I can always remember Jock Whitebury telling me you've got a bigger pay than us, you ken. It was the Company that sent me down, they could not break me, because I mean it was all wrong for them to break me because I never asked for to get sent down, they sent me down. So, I was, right through the whole of the Oil Industry I mean, It wasn't hardly a plant that I was on my own. And then they started getting meters in, flow meters into the Company then, so they had to send so many men to get trained so I was one of them that got sent for that by course in their flow meters and I looked after them.....

GC And what was a flow meter?

JA That was for measuring the, oh well they used them for everything, you see they used, if you were pumping stuff from one part to another instead of working with pressure, they had a meter that measured the flow, and the staff there, you could get maybe ( ? ) it was grafted on a, it could be measured in gallons or if you had steam, you could measure it in cubic feet. They used flow meters for everything, which become, I mean there were the Company were putting the work ( ? ) I think, because they become more sophisticated after I left, I mean, I was talking to young fellas that was on when I was there, but it was "yon" doctor Stewart that was

in charge of all that department then, I was practically under his jurisdiction while I was there.

GC Was he a Chemist?

JA Aye, he was a Chemist and he was very keen on this meter, wee bit more modern minded than the general running chemist.

GC And did you have any grafts or anythings that register ( ? )

JA It registered everything that went in, and I went round every morning and took all the charts off, put the ones on for the same, the next day, and then I serviced all these meters and that was my last job that I had when I, when I finished up in Westwood. Well, I didn't finish up in Westwood really myself, they were needing an auto electrician down in Middleton Hall in the work in the motor repair shop and this bloke came up one day and I don't know who told him that I sometimes worked on cars, I mean I hadn't no great experience or anything. So he told me that this job that was going down in the workshops and I wasn't too keen.....

GC And this was where?

JA At Middleton Hall.

GC Can you remember when that was?

JA Oh I just can't, I couldn't recall, I was staying a year down there anyway, but I can't remember when the date was.

GC And you went into the motor repair shop?

JA So I was there for ten year and.....

GC Who was the manager then?

JA In the motor repair shop, it was a man Charles, Ian Adams was there most of the time but I can't mind that other one's name.

GC Can you remember your foreman?

JA My foreman, it was the shop foreman, was Willie Glencourse. Well I was more or less my own foreman, you see they had their own electrical squad, was different than I was. But he was, Gerry he was the foreman in the shop really, so there was no...

GC And and what kind of work did you do in the motor repair shop?

JA Well I did all the electrical work, electrical work you see.

GC So you then became near enough an auto electrician?

JA Aye, well that was what I was, that was what I was put down as. But that job got a bit too much for me as well, because yon big twelve volt batteries out of yon bing tankers, if you was left yourself at times and you swing them yon things about and it was no easy work, no I decided I retired a wee bit for early, I mean I could have asked for to get made redundant, which some of them did, but I didn't do that, I just went down and told them I'm finishing up. So when I finished up there, I went and joined a wee firm that started down at Newbridge, and nothing to do with Scottish Oils at all. Finished with them...

GC Now when you were at Middleton, you weren't there when that accident happened at the Uphall Station bridge.

JA No, that was previous to me being down there.

GC That was before you went there.

JA Aye.

GC And is there any incidents that you can remember, say at Burngrange or Oakbank before that? At Addiewell or...

JA Oh I can mind there that wax sheds gone on fire at Oakbank. I wasn't working at the works then, but I stayed at Redcraig, which was above the works of it, in a full view of the house, and that was in 19, it was 19, years of the, during the great world war, I think it was 1916 that the wax sheds and that was a big one an awful fire, burnt the whole thing out. And previous to that I mind my father telling me that they had the same sort of thing had happened in Whiteshears down the road, which was nearer the village, that burnt, had been burnt down, that was the 2nd time they'd been burnt down. Oh they had to come and put in new wax sheds and storage space and all that in 1916, but I mean I wasn't working of course, but that's when it was. So in my career I've seen, I mean I was there when a lot of men were killed and that, but you never heard that much about it in the pits, I mean you used to hear that so and so was hurt, they were all killed, but I mean I never was curious enough for to enquire about it all.

GC Were you a member of the Union?

JA Oh aye, I always have been a member of a union since whenever I started working.

GC Which Union?

JA I was down this, the Company's Union I was in until I went down to Middleton, then I was in the engineer's union then, which was the union of the years at that time when I was at Middleton.

GC Now, when you started work, where were you living, were you...

JA When I started work we were in an Oakbank Village.

GC With the, the shale miners and that.

JA Aye.

GC Now, was that bit that was, were these houses that were built by the Company, Oil Company.

JA Uh, uh, they were all, all the houses in Oakbank, bar that wee village, that was row that I told you about, that was built by a man named Fuller. There was a wood there, there was a clay work in Oakbank previous to Oakbank work had been sited there, and they made bricks and field drains. As a matter of fact, quite a number of places in Oakbank works that I've been in and came on these bricks when you was working maybe and seemingly they had the Oakbank stamped on them, there was nothing else on it, that was, these bricks were made in the old Oakbank. I know where we stayed they had a bit of them in their garden you ken, souvenirs.

GC And these bricks were used at Oak....

JA I don't know just what they were used for, but they were made in Oakbank. They must have had a kiln there. And the proof of that was when they were making that new road across there, you ken that new road they made across from Dedridge there, right across to Oakbank, and by pass East Calder. It came onto that old clay pit, that was always ( ? ) it.

GC Is that the by-pass that's there now?

JA Aye.

GC The latest one.

JA Aye. But a lot of folk didn't know about the clay pit until the work blokes came on it and they had the greatest job getting to the rock there, of course this, they ( ? ) long was down, it must have been. And it was a very peculiar clay there, it was a blue and red clay that was up there, it was a lot of that when quoiting was

prevelent. They used to come through from all over for to get this clay for their quoiting heads.

GC Of course that was a famous pass time of the miners, oil workers...

JA Aye, that's right, aye in East Calder and Kirknewton and these places when.....

GC Was there, was there much gambling done on these days?

JA Aye I think there was quite a, they used to play for purses, maybe forty and fifty pound, but they'd be gambling on the heads, maybe gambling on so many shots. Very famous East Calder, East Calder men can put you wise on these things. I used to go round to East Calder and tell Jimmy Lanes you know, do you ken him, he's a bricklayer, he used to work for Pumpherston Works. And he was the greatest of they ( ? ), he could tell you about all the different boys, he used to watch them from his door. He could tell you how much money they were winning and losing all that sort of thing.

GC Now, the likes of that, was that, as far as the police were concerned, was that illegal, you gambling on the.....

JA Well, I suppose it would be, but I don't think they would interfere very much, I mean they weren't any bookmakers, it was only a private bet between you and maybe someone else that supported, fancied somebody else. I mean, it wasn't that, I don't think it would be illegal in the sense that you were gambling with a bookmaker or someone that was just having a bet with your mate maybe.

GC And was there anything else that you took part in, like eh...

JA Och, I played a lot of tennis. Of course the Company gave us a tennis court.

GC Where was that about?

JA In Oakbank. It was right opposite where the works gate is. Well where that road is now you can't see where it was, but they had a tennis court and then the bowling green was there.

GC Can you remember when the bowling green was opened?

JA No, and nobody can settle that very much the now. There is quite a lot of folk that would be able to answer that. But I've heard my old man talking to me but for to give even, even a guess I've no idea, because I've heard him talking about it, because he was in Oakbank when he was very young, he started his work in Oakbank when he was 12 years old.

GC And had you any other hobbies or anything that you liked doing, when you were in Oakbank?

JA No.

GC Pastimes.

JA No, I ( ? ) I was kind of political minded at that time, couldn't get me near enough a communist meeting for to go to and that sort of thing ken. Ken, when you're young and you're going to a, you land in a village that's struck right off the register in a back water and no work, it's the best education you can get really.

GC So therefore you had leanings towards communism?

JA Oh no, no, no you just wanted me to say that, no, but I mean that's right socialist policy, and then of course for the size of it, it was a great community Oakbank you know, because they had men in there and they were conversing of the likes of Davy Kirkwood and all these men, they were ken, right, right socialists, and they used to bring them through there quite regular and the meetings were always packed at that time. And they had a Burn's club and they had men in there that was, that must have had awful lot of knowledge of where to go and get singers and they used to have, there was Burn's club used to run monthly concerts in the Wintertime. Six monthly night concert season, the best of the cream, the best of Scotland used to come down there and sing. Quite often. And then there were the odd dramatic club and things like that, male ( ? ). See we're a wee bit off the beaten track and you had to make all your own enjoyment and fun, so....

GC Now, you did play tennis, now you were keen on that.

JA Uh, uh. I played quite a lot of tennis aye.

GC And was the court well used?

JA Oh aye, when we were members, as long as the work were going

in, it was well used and even after the work, as a matter of fact, I looked after the tennis court for nothing for long enough after the work shut down, because the company used to give us a man that would go up and mow it and keep it in order, but of course the company dissolved and we did it ourselves but after I left, stopped playing tennis, it went for a number of years after that as well. I think, when the war came along that kind of stopped, nobody went very much to the place to play tennis ( ? ).

GC But they still kept the bowling green?

JA The bowling green never shut down, it's been going all that time. It's been doing for years now with ( ? ).

GC And you said something about this centenary a while ago.

JA Not so many, was it year, last year, the year previous to that, you make enquiries of the likes of Willie Findlay he's one of them, Jock Wilson's another one, he's still quite interested in the bowling club I think.

GC They both stay in East Calder?

JA Aye, they stay in East Calder.

GC And you did a lot of walking!

JA Oh aye, an awful lot of walking.

GC Where did you walk from?

JA Right over the Pentlands. Everywhere to the Pentlands. I liked walking.

GC And what was your usual route?

JA Well, I used to right, go right up, you could leave Oakbank and go right up through to Corsten and you went across to Corsten Hill and right up through the Cauld Stane Slab right across to Baddingshill and down to ( ? ) here, well ( ? ).

GC And was there any actual accidents other than your wife has told me about?

JA Oh well I've seen accidents in the works of course, I've seen, well I didn't see, but I mind a man being killed when at, in Oakbank Work when we were in it he looked after the coal, the boilers there, and he'd come up and never reported to anybody and he nearly went missing and they discovered him in a coal conveyor, killed. He came from Wilkieston if I remember right.

GC And did the coal from there, was for what, taken.....

JA Taking the coal right up to the hoppers, and he fell into one of them.

GC Was this for the power station?

JA Oh there were quite a number of deaths and this man of, same as Alex Kirston, but there were a fella in Oakbank got his life saved, but he didn't know it. He was bringing down empty wagons for the breaker down at the, by the siding and something or other...

GC And this happened when?

JA Oh that must have happened about 1918,1919.

GC Was that in Oakbank?

JA Aye, Oakbank, Aye.

GC Did you have any special tools, or did you make any of your own tools?

JA Made most of them, ( ? ).

GC Did you get the blacksmith to make them?

JA The blacksmiths aye, they would forge them for you, then you could, ( ? ) or do what you liked with them, but the ( ? ) I mind all the spanners and things were always made in the works. I'd assume you'd know that.

GC Did you ever come across any, not old, keepsakes or anything made from shale?

JA Aye, as a matter of fact, there was quite a lot of them in that place, in fact I know where there's a bible, now that I'm sure Jessie works with the woman. I'll ask her, maybe just a block of shale, made a lovely job. Oh I know there were some blokes very skillful and that, I never was very skillful at it, but I've other blokes that ( ? ) got a lot of work on. And bookends and things like that made of shale.

GC And you'd be able to maybe get...

JA Well I'll try, I ken where, I ken, I'm almost sure, ( ? ) I think Jessie Wilson's  
brother....

VOICES VERY DISTANT. UNABLE TO MAKE OUT SPEECH.

END OF SIDE ONE & TAPE

Transcript

JA

Industrial  
Information

I served my time as a maintenance engineer at Oakbank Oil Company. My old man was my gaffer. I was there until it closed in 1931. I then got a job at a new mine called Burngrange. I was employed sinking the shaft, putting in all the plant, general labouring, general engineering and general everything. They started to sink Burngrange pit in 1936 or 1937. I am not too certain on that. I sent to work at Addiewell, where they were putting in a new power station. We never had a power station in Addiewell before. Now that they had got this in and underway, they asked if I would stay in the power station until they trained up men to run it. I went from there to Westwood in 1941, where they were putting in at Addiewell. I lost notion at the power station after a while. I then moved to another firm called Mavon-Colson of Glasgow. They were putting all the handling and conveying equipment. I was with them for two years. I was right through the whole Oil Industry, there wasn't a plant I didn't work in.

Flow Meters

I got sent on a course on flow meters. Their purpose was to measure the flow rate rather than pressure. It could measure gallons, or if

you were working in steam, it measured cubic feet. I 'went round every morning to take the charts off, and put new ones on. I serviced all these meters as well. I was right through the Oil Industry.

Auto Repair Shop  
Middleton Hall

I then left Westwood and got a job at Middleton Hall in the auto repair shop, and I was there for ten years. I did all the auto-electrical work there. My foreman was Willie Glencourse. I retired from there a wee bit early because lifting the big twelve volt batteries got too much for me, so I left.

Newbridge Farm

I then went to a wee firm that started up at Newbridge. Nothing to do with Scottish Oils at all.

Accidents  
Fire At War Sheds

I can remember a fire at the war sheds at Oakbank. I think it was in 1916, that an awful fire burned down the whole place.

Accident at  
Oakbank

I can mind of a man being killed at Oakbank Works. He looked after the boilers there. He fell into one of the hoppers at the coal conveyor and was killed.

Tools

The blacksmith made most of our tools we used. They were made in the forge.

Wages

I came down from Addiewell to Westwood, here the tradesmen were getting less than I was getting. I think it was 10/3d. I had 10/6d. I can always remember Jock Whitebuy telling me You've got a bigger pay than us.

### Unions

I was a member of a union ever since I started working. It was up to the Company, to which Union you belonged to. At Middleton Hall I belonged to the engineers' union.

### Domestic Life

#### Houses

When I was in Oakbank Village all the houses were built by the Oil Company. They were constructed by a man called Fuller. There was wood and clay there, the clay works was at Oakbank. They made the bricks. They came across the old clay pit when they made the new road from Dedridge to Oakbank, that by-passed East Calder.

### Leisure Activities

#### Tennis Courts

I looked after the tennis court for nothing for long enough. After the works shut down. It went on for a number of years but the war came along and put a stop to it.

### Bowling Green

The bowling green never shut down, I hear that Willie Findlay and Jock Wilson still play bowls.

### Walking

I did a lot of walking, I used to walk right over the Pentlands. My usual route was from Oakbank right through to Corsten and across to Corsten Hill and right up through the "Cauld Stane Slab" right across to Baddings-hill and down to (no name)

### Keepsakes From

#### Shale Mines

There were quite a lot of keepsakes from the shale mines, like a bible a woman has carved out a block of shale, also book ends made from shale.